(b) if so, the present position thereof;

(c) whether the proposed agreement would cover all the criminals; and

(d) if not, the details of the criminals not to be covered under the proposed agreement?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI KAMALA SINHA): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) Draft Extradition Treaty was sent to the UAE side in May 1996. The UAE side has suggested some amendments to the draft text. Based on response from the Indian side to the suggested changes, a delegation from the UAE side visited India from 24-25 November 1997 and held discussions with a view to finalising the Agreement.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Details of the crimes to be covered by the proposed Agreement are under negotiation with the U.A.E.

US Offer for "Strategic' Dialogue"

943. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state the connotation of the new US strategy of having "strategic dialogue" with India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI KAMALA SINHA): India and the United States are engaged in an intensive and integrated process of dialogue, including a number of highlevel visits. The United States has described this as a "strategic dialogue". The US side defined "strategic dialogue" as "thinking in the future rather that discussing the past". Senior US officials have clarified that the "strategic dialogue" with India does not have any military connotation, and is intended to mean that "the two countries exchange their views not only on bilateral matters but also on regional and global issues and how best we can cooperate in confronting them.

Government's understanding of "strategic dialogue" is that it is a way of continuing indepth and comprehensive discussions on important issues so as to reactivate and upgrade the entire Indo-US relationship through regular exchanges with them.

Irregularities in accounts of Haj Committee

944. SHRI K. REHMAN KHAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 938 given in the Rajya Sabhaa on the 31st July, 1997 and state:

(a) whether any serious irregularities have been pointed out by the auditors in the account of the Haj Committee; and

(b) what are the details of the audit reports and the annual accounts, balance, income and expenditure account for the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERWANI): (a) No, Sir.

(b) The audit of the Haj Committee for the last two years (1995-96 and 1996-97) has not taken place as yet. The detailed report of the audit for 1994-95 and Copies of the annual accounts, balance, income and expenditure accounts of the Haj Committee for the last three years are given in the Annexure. [*See Appendix 182, Annexure No. 24*]

Effects of U.S. and Russia Accord on India's Nuclear Capability

945. SHRI K.M. SAIFULLAH: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) Whether the accord signed between the US and Russia in September this year for halting production of weapons-grade plutonium in both the countries will have adverse effect on India's nuclear capability; and

(b) if so, whether steps are being taken to ensure that the country nuclear programme does not suffer?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI KAMALA SINHA): (a) Over the past several years the United States and Russia have been coordinating their efforts to check the proliferation in weapons grade nuclear material. The present agreement seeks to terminate production of plutonium at three sites in Russia thus contributing to the advancement of US-Russia non-proliferation objectives. This agreement is not expected to have an adverse effect on India's nuclear capability.

(b) Government remains fully committed to safeguard the country's security against all eventualities. Government considers a robust and viable nuclear option essential for our national security. As such India will not accept any constraints its nuclear option as long as other countries remain unwilling to accept an obligation to eliminate their nuclear weapons within a time bound framework.

Visit of US Assistant Secretary of State to New Delhi

946. SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:
SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) Whether an American team led by the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State visited New Delhi in the first week of September, 1997 on the eve of Prime Minister's visit to the U.S.;

(b) if so, the issues discussed with the team and the outcome thereof; and

(c) whether it was considered by Government as an exercise of controlling the damage done by Ms. Robin Raphel, his predecessor in office and also as a measure to improve relations after sorting out the problems arising from end of the cold war?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI KAMALA SINHA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) This was the First visit to India by the new US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs after his appointment. It was therefore in the nature of an area-orientation visit. In meetings in India, he expressed the keen interest of the new US Administration in improving relations with India and providing a thrust to bilateral cooperation. Issues like cooperation in law-enforcement, science and technology, economic and commercial links, environment and terrorism were discussed in detail during this visit.

Cross-Border firing on Kashmir Borders

947. SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that while Pakistan was talking of peace and friendly relations with India, cross-border firing and shelling on Kashmir borders including LOC and militancy perpetrated by Pak-agencies backed by ISI of Pakistan were accentuated during and on the eve of the recent Foreign Secretary level talks and the talks between the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan held in New York during recent UN General Assembly Session; and

(b) if so, the details of such incidents during the past four months, indicating the number of persons, civilians, including women and children and militants and security personnel killed on both sides?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI KAMALA SINHA): (a) and (b) Pakistan's support to cross-border terrorism and its unprovoked firings along the Line of Control and the International Boundary in Jammu and Kashmir continue.